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Awaiting Budget Lead

FEW major forward decisions are likely to be made in business circles in Canada until Mr. Fleming has delivered his budget address on April 9, coincidentally the anniversary of the Battle of Vimy. A sharp increase in taxation affecting take-home pay, while a corrective against inflationary trends, might cut seriously into retail and wholesale turnover and thus affect manufacturing output all round. A resort by the Dominion to automatic inflation through heavy public borrowings might have less effect on the domestic market, but it would render still more difficult the effective sale of Canadian exports. With real hazards in both directions, the government must soon make plain what course it will follow.

Internally, the year 1959 opened well. The volume of domestic business in Canada remained steady, and climbed a little in durable goods. Housing construction resumed early, with more vigor than was evident at the end of 1958. Unemployment remained fairly static, but employment showed some gains beyond seasonal factors. The gross national product was rising in January and February, and in the first month Canada's external trade deficit declined. February, however, did not support the same trend in foreign trade; imports increased while exports declined. Also it has been noticed that while the gross national product advanced in the new year by 2.5 per cent, the actual volume of goods handled in the same period held to a 1 per cent improvement. Rail car loadings, one of the barometers of trade, have been moving down.

If Mr. Fleming were in a position to ignore the economic weather in Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere, he would still have a considerable problem on his hands in regard to federal financing in 1959. The conversion loans of last year gave a brief easement to the treasury at a measurable cost, but federal revenues have not been buoyant and budgetary needs unofficially are reported to have grown through the carry-forward from other years and more recent additions under the present regime. In the end, however, Mr. Fleming will have to strike a national balance somehow, in more difficult economic weather than Canada has known in some time. The battle of the budget to follow may indeed rival Vimy Ridge.

Mr. Gaglardi Has His Way

THE first break away from British Columbia's long-standing 50-mile-an-hour highway speed limit has been made by Highways Minister P. A. Gaglardi, and in three places in the province it is now lawful to drive at 60 miles an hour. For a long time Mr. Gaglardi as the minister in charge of highways has had difficulty restraining impatience with what he believes to be an unrealistic restriction, and as a driver has not always done so. His penchant for fast driving is well known, and Mr. Gaglardi makes no secret of it.

Whether or not the branch of government responsible for law enforcement concurs in the change made by the highways minister—under the wide powers vested in him by statute—has not been stated; but up until recently at any rate the motor vehicle branch appeared to be strenuously opposed to any increase in permissible speed. Excessive speed may not always be the prime cause but is almost invariably an essential ingredient of the worst highway crashes—the killer ingredient—and it is that fact which influences the thinking of the safety authorities on the subject of legal limits.

In fairness to Mr. Gaglardi it may be said that from the day he took office he has thrown himself with truly amazing enthusiasm into the task of giving British Columbia the best arterial highways that available money can buy, and has had to smart under the frustration of a uniform 50-mile limit for highways on which a good driver in a good car could attain speeds nearly twice that. Despite all this, however, raising the limit by 10 miles an hour introduces an element of risk, not so much in most instances in the 60-mile limit itself as in the much faster driving it invites. Not all motorists are as experienced and skilful drivers as Mr. Gaglardi. What may be reasonably safe for a good driver may be risky for the other kind, of whom there are far too many.

For the time being the 60-mile limit will apply only to three stretches of highway, one of them north of Nanaimo, and is in the nature of an experiment. No doubt the practicability of it will be weighed against the accident statistics which, though it may be the only feasible way of doing it, seems to be a rather hazardous way of conducting an experiment.

Over for the Season

PROFESSIONAL ice hockey in Victoria is over for another year. One supposes that the Cougars won't be sorry, even if their ejection from the playoffs was somewhat summary. A hockey season is a long drawn out affair, and even the keenest enthusiasm is apt to lose its fine edge. Professional playing, also, leaves little opportunity for thoughts of other interests, and the maintenance of physical and mental zest is a strain over a six-month period.

On the whole the Cougars performed creditably during the season. There may be some disappointment that in the first round of the playoffs they should suffer three defeats in succession and thus bow quickly out of competition, but they reached the playoffs. This is really the criterion, for it means a sustained effort to hold a good place in the league table all winter long. It is when a club fails to reach the playoff series that it feels itself to have failed.

The Cougar players can lay their skates and sticks away with good grace. They provided fine entertainment, and that is the main role of professional sports clubs. Even their up-and-down habits added to the general interest, for a team which usually wins or usually loses does not titillate the spectators as does one which keeps supporters in suspense. And if there were no suspense a game would die of ennui.

Since there is always hope in sporting circles that next year will be a better one, local fans will look for some new faces when next October comes around. There are always trades and player shuffles between seasons, and these add to expectations and to box office appeal. If some "name" players can be added to the roster the Cougars may expect even better public support than has been the case this past year. Meanwhile the summer layoff will be welcome to members of this winter's line-ups; invariably they gave of the best they had, and no one can do more.

Interpreting the News

Iraq in Balancing Act

By KEN METHERAL

Canadian Press Staff Writer

IT would be a mistake, at this stage, to regard Maj.-Gen. Abdel Kassem's long-expected decision to withdraw Iraq from the Bagdad Pact as a deliberate affront to the West.

The pact has never had popular support in the country. Hostility to it undoubtedly was a contributing factor to last year's revolution that overthrew the monarchy and brought Kassem to power.

It may well be that his decision to do so now means he feels a need for more elbow room in order to steer the tricky course between his Communist supporters and President Nasser's pan-Arabism.

All the indications are that he has shown considerable skill in obtaining maximum advantage from an action that did little more than put the official seal on something already accomplished. Iraq has taken no real part in the pact since the revolution and Iraqi delegates were conspicuously absent from the pact council meeting in Karachi last January.

The severing of the link with Britain, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan helps keep Kassem's Communist supporters in Iraq in line and takes away a propaganda weapon Egypt had been using against him with considerable effect.

In addition, he has used the pact as bait to entice a loan of some £50,000,000 from Moscow under a technical and economic agreement ratified less than 24 hours before the decision to withdraw was announced.

The Western world can draw comfort from the fact that throughout the recent crisis of the Mosul revolt Kassem showed no sign of hostility toward Western oil companies—a traditional practice of Arab countries in moments of crisis. Ever since Kassem assumed power, he has made it clear that he has no desire to force them out of Iraq.

Iraq's oil production is increasing and with it the Iraqi share of the revenues, which constitute Kassem's chief hope of achieving stability for his regime.

Out-Churchilling Sir Winston

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

IN an eastern paper there is a picture of Mackenzie King as he appeared in 1910, reproduced from the book "William Lyon Mackenzie King." It is such a nice picture that if you want to see it you should buy the book. It shows him in his Windsor uniform and he is a handsome looking young man. He was but 36 years old then and this picture makes one regret that age cannot be held back. How flattering to us all if our looks could stay as they are at 36, an age that balances itself neatly between youth and what comes after. Actually 36 is one year more than half the Biblical span but no one in his thirties ever concedes that he is middle-aged.

I am not very well posted on the matter but I take it that the Windsor uniform Mr. King is wearing in this picture is the official garb of the Canadian privy councillor, the distinction that puts "Honorable" in front of the names of all federal cabinet ministers, and for all time. Provincial cabinet ministers have a more tenuous grasp on the prefix "Honorable" and must wish that in their case also the deprivation of office did not reduce them to mere "Mister." If memory serves that sturdy empire builder Duff Pattullo took the demotion hard when fate dealt with him as in turn it does with all premiers and prime ministers, either by election or other circumstance. On the federal scene when the polls close the social bed is softer to fall on when people mark their ballots in the wrong squares.

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But I was thinking as I looked at Mr. King, so young and smart in his uniform it is a marvel he managed to remain a bachelor—what were the Ottawa girls dreaming of in those days—that the parliamentary scene would be much gayer if privy councillors wore their Windsor garb more often. I don't ever recall seeing Mr. King in uniform, and of course might not have recognized him had I done so, the intervening years having added somewhat to his figure, and indeed one seldom sees pictures of federal cabinet ministers in this Windsor garb. They should remember that a uniform covers a multitude of imperfections, as many a war bride discovered when her hero doffed his uniform, and that as a vote-getter the dress of a privy councillor would be sure to put an opponent wholly in the shade.

The Windsor dress is so full of embroidery I can't be sure but the Mr. King of 1910 seems to be sporting a decoration. This would be the CMG that came to him a few years before as a portent of the OM that reached him at the apex of his career. There has always been an amusing anomaly about this because he set his face against decorations for Canadians and established the pattern that keeps them off the honors list which emanate from the House of Windsor. But perhaps he thought the Windsor uniform absolved him from any seeming inconsistency.

At any rate, this reproduction of his youthful period does him credit and he certainly looks the part in ceremonial attire. I would not wonder if, happening they see it, it did not cause some envy among our elect at James Bay. Undoubtedly the opening of the Legislature, presently the monopoly of the ladies for color and gaiety of dress, would be enriched if sombre morning coats and striped trousers gave way to an embroidered ceremonial coat. Uniforms of any kind look so well in pictures, too.

Gerald Waring

Reports from Ottawa

THE government's decision to give the home defence army "primary and direct responsibility" for civil defence makes good sense on two grounds.

Prime Minister Diefenbaker mentioned one when he told the Commons that "in the intense early phase of a nuclear war" civil defence is "likely to be more important and urgent than other tasks on which the army in Canada would be engaged."

The PM certainly did not over-state the situation. The "30-day war" talked about a year or two ago has now been cut down, and most recently by USAF chief of staff Gen. Thomas D. White only a week or so ago, to a two or three-day war of nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The war Gen. White envisaged would obviously encompass no combatant role for our three so-called defence of Canada battalions—the RCR, the Royal 22nd, and the PPCLI — much less the Reserve Army, which was detailed to civil defence a year ago last fall. So these three regular battalions which are nominally standing by to defend Canada against invasion by ground troops are available for other duties.

In time new combatant duties might be found for them, in anti-ICBM radar and missilry, but for the immediate future their area of usefulness in Canada will be for civil defence.

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The decision also makes good sense on the ground that the army's new CD duties, such as warning of attack, location and monitoring of explosions and radioactive fallout, assessment of damaged areas and their decontamination and clearance, and rescue operations, are functions "extremely difficult for any civilian agency to carry out effectively." The quoted opinion is that of Maj.-Gen. F. F. Worthington, who was federal co-ordinator of civil defence from 1948 until his retirement two years ago.

Worthington, who has never been backward about criticizing governmental tail-dragging in civil defence, approves the new policy. The jobs the army will do, he says, require full-time training for which civil volunteers just aren't available.

What the government has announced is broad policy: new duties for the army, continued provincial and municipal responsibilities in caring for civilian victims, fire fightnig, traffic control and policing, and federal willingness to pay 75 per cent of provincial and local CD costs. Myriad decisions as to detail remain to be made, many in consultation with provincial authorities.

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The prime minister's statement offers no opinion on the effectiveness of civil defence. Perhaps that's just as well. Popular apathy based on fatalism is one of the greatest obstacles facing the CD authorities. But it seems undeniable that many more persons would be saved if we have an efficient CD organization than if we don't.

Diefenbaker also failed to report on current thinking about shelters and urban evacuation, so I asked Worthington.

"I definitely think," Worthington said, "that civilians should be sheltered against radioactive fallout. Most homes, he asserted, can be made safe against fallout for up to seven days, if sealed and shielded with concrete or sandbags, and if stocked with water and food.

"The idea of tactical evacuation is just impossible," he said There's no time any more to clear out large cities after attack warnings have been received. But he says that, prior to attack warning, as many persons as possible should be gotten out of potential target areas. And, he adds, residents of small communities should be made to stay put.

The Packsack

Of GREGORY CLARK

SINCE they never get frost in the roadbeds across thousands of railway miles in the southern and southwestern states, the trains run with a smoothness that seems heavenly to us northeners. You can even bird-watch through the coach window with your field glasses, without jiggling.

What had me excited was the number of large hawks —redtails, roughlegs, Swainson's and marsh hawks—that flew right alongside the train, at a distance of only 50 feet or so, for as long as they could keep up with the speeding transcontinental. I had my glasses on them, and an elderly man up the club car a few seats finally joined me.

He was a southerner, familiar with the phenomenon.

"The hawks have found out," he said, "that the passing of the train scares out all sorts of small creatures, birds, mice, moles, rabbits, from the neighborhood of the tracks where they have wandered. Especially the young mice and rabbits not yet accustomed to this hourly hurricane of steel that rushes past. And young mice and rabbits make the best eating. So the hawks, on the approach of the train, swing over and accompany it for a few hundred yards, and invariably get good pickings from among the flustered small fry that are panicked."

We went to the rear vestibule of the train. And sure enough saw hawks pouncing in our wake.

Fun, Fact and Fiction

A New Yorker, in quest of a wealthy widow, consulted a marriage broker. The broker described one of his clients as being "like a picture" and the man arranged to meet her at a corner table at a Broadway night spot.

The man winced when the woman arrived and he noticed her dark moustache, misplaced eyes, and wart on her nose. "I thought," he yelled at the broker later, "you told me she was like a picture."

The broker shrugged. "Either you like Picasso or you don't."

Now that it has been determined that "steaks from tranquillized steers taste better" perhaps science will also come up with a soothing injection to stop the radish from fighting back.

* * *

The clergyman on his vacation wrote a long letter concerning his travelling experiences to be circulated among the members of his congregation. The letter opened in this form.

"Dear Friends: I will not address you as ladies and gentlemen, because I feel I know you so well."

Washington Angle

Fears on Both Sides

By DAVID LAWRENCE

EVERYBODY is happy, externally at least, over the Macmillan-Eisenhower talks—that is, everybody but Moscow. For, unfortunately for them, the Soviets haven't been told just what the British and American governments will agree to or what formula they would accept that could solve the Berlin question or anything else.

Strange as it may seem to the Russians, the American and British officials do not feel that it is incumbent upon them to furnish Moscow with a transcript of what was said at Camp David.

So what has come out in the open can be regarded as just window-dressing for everybody on the Western side, though, with respect to the Soviets, it becomes merely a demonstration of willingness to meet and negotiate.

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The official Soviet news agency known as "Tass" naively laments that the Russians have not been let in on the secret conferences. A United Press International dispatch from Moscow says the Soviets have told their press that, while President Eisenhower under "the pressure of world public opinion" did agree tentatively to "summit" talks, he cold-shouldered Macmillan's plan for "balancing" military forces in Europe. The dispatch quotes "Tass" further as saying:

"Official statements by U.S. and British representatives show that the present talks have not led to the adoption of any definite decisions in almost all the remaining questions."

But no negotiator worth his salt would, in advance of a negotiation, shout from the housetops through the press of the world just what he is willing to accept. Obviously the prime minister of Britain and the president of the United States exchanged views and discussed hypothetically all sorts of plans and ideas. The Moscow government may have the erroneous impression that the foreign ministers' conference at Geneva on May 11 is to be merely a perfunctory meeting to arrange the agenda for the summit conference in July or August, but the United States doesn't see it that way. Unless there is some real progress made at Geneva in May, it is just conceivable that there will be no summit conference.

* * *

This means that something substantial has to be agreed upon at the first meeting. This is important because, even if a stenographer from the Russian foreign office had been present to take down everything said at the Camp David conferences, there still would remain the big unanswered question of the age: Will Soviet Russia keep any written agreement she makes, and can her government be trusted?

There wouldn't be any need of a summit conference or any other kind of meeting at high level if there were mutual trust between Moscow and Washington comparable to the mutual trust that prevails between London and Washington.

It seems a hard point to get over to the Russians, but if they ever made a substantial concession and showed evidence of keeping faith it would do more to forward the cause of peace in Europe and elsewhere than all the publicity of a summit conference could ever accomplish.

The question of reduction of armaments or limitation of the size of armed forces or the policing of areas in central Europe by troops other than those of the local government concerned would yield to easy solution if there were mutual trust. Conversely, no plan, no matter how brilliantly balanced on paper to give the impression of fairness, will be of any avail so long as distrust persists.

* * *

The plain truth is that fear exists on both sides. The Soviets think Allied bases and armed forces near their territory threaten them and that a surprise attack can come at any time from the West. Similarly, the West is convinced that the behavior of the Soviet armies in the countries they have conquered, including East Germany, is that of a ruthless aggressor with no consideration for the rights of their own peoples or other peoples.

In such circumstances, the cold war cannot be ended by terms of virtual surrender which the Soviets continually insist upon. For, despite the talk of "flexibility" among Western chiefs — a good word to use in placating political opposition domestically — the true word is "firmness."

There is no intention on the part of the West to surrender to the Soviets, and there is no trust placed in the Soviets. For, while they claim they didn't present an ultimatum to get Western troops out of Berlin in May, the impression still prevails here that they thought they could negotiate with the West under duress.

That plan has failed, and there is not the slightest indication that the West will accept any plan that recognizes the Soviet Union as the conquering ruler of West Berlin.